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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0426
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RUEHXX/GENEVA IO MISSIONS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 0483
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DILI 000247

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SUBJECT: EAST TIMOR SITREP #1 FOR MAY 23, 2006

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CLASSIFIED BY: Sean Stein, Charge de Affairs, Embassy Dili,
State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (SBU) Summary:
GOET PROPOSAL FOR TALKS FALTERS AS REINADO AND FDTL CLASH
COMMENTS FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTER
REQUESTS FROM THE GOET
POLICE ISSUES
IDP CAMPS
SITUATION IN DILI
End Summary.

GOET PROPOSAL FOR TALKS FALTERS AS REINADO AND FDTL CLASH

12. (C) Charge Stein and USDR traveled to Gleno at the request of Foreign Minister Horta this morning to meet with representatives of the dissident military groups and to persuade them to join a proposed dialogue to be lead by President Gusmao and including representatives from the Military, Parliament, Catholic church, and Police. Once the agreement of the groups was secured, the Foreign Minister traveled from Dili and joined the discussions. While still meeting with the groups, Ramos Horta received a call around 11:30am from Prime Minister Alkatiri notifying him that fighting between Maj. Reinado, who had not attended the meeting, and a band of AWOL military police and petitioners and the FDTL had broken out in the mountain town of Fatu Ahi, several kilometers to the south of Dili. The PM reportedly told Horta that FDTL had taken control of the situation and was going to "see it through to the end".

13. (U) According to various reports, the conflict began after Reinado came down from his base in Aileu, accompanied by a group of petitioners, to convey his demands to an Australian journalist. Reinado was reportedly infuriated that the national television channel did not broadcast his message in full last night and hoped that the Australian journalist would spread his

much stronger, inflammatory message.

14. (SBU) The first shots were fired at approximately 11:30 am. It is not clear which side initiated contact. Shortly after hostilities commenced, FDTL deployed troops from Dili and Metinaro to the area. FDTL sources have confirmed that the FDTL has initiated a general mobilization of troops from Baucau, Metinaro, and Hera.

15. (U) At present, a group of soldiers from Tasi Tolu has set up a check point near the western edge of the capital city. Other FDTL posts are reportedly being established throughout Dili. Currently, the clashes between the two sides do not appear to be moving closer to the capital.

16. (C) The number of casualties from the clash remains unclear, but Government and military sources have confirmed that there are at least 7 FDTL injured. USDR received a brief call from Reinado at 3:30pm indicating that he was still alive. In a phone conversation with Embassy staff at approximately 4:00pm, Lt. Salsinha reported that two injured members of Reinado's group had returned to Aileu. There are no other reports of injuries to members of Reinado's group.

COMMENTS FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTER

17. (U) In a briefing for the diplomatic corps, FM Horta stated that the government remained committed to carrying out the proposed dialogue with all groups with the exception of the one led by Maj Reinado.

REQUESTS FROM THE GOET

18. (C) After the briefing for the diplomatic corps, Horta asked to meet privately with the Charge. In that meeting, Horta conveyed his appreciation for assistance in helping to negotiate with the dissident groups and requested that the Charge maintain contact with Majors Tilman and Tara to encourage them to remain

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calm and to refrain from taking any actions which might be considered hostile. Horta also reported that he and Prime Minister Alkatiri had met immediately prior to the briefing and had decided to request immediate "robust" multilateral or bilateral police assistance. He said that he had spoken to the Portuguese foreign minister and had been told that the Portuguese president was reconsidering the decision to deploy GNR (the Portuguese National Guard) and that he was hopeful that Australia would immediately dispatch police. Timor did not intend to request military assistance at this time. Horta also said that the Security Council was not scheduled to consider the situation in Timor until June 5 and that Timor was considering the possibility of asking the Council to move this date forward.

POLICE ISSUES

19. (C) On the road from Gleno, Charge and USDR witnessed a group of 11 police who reported that they were heading to Ermera to join Maj. Tilman. In addition, EmbOffs sited several of Maj. Tilman's followers establishing lookout posts to the west of Dili. Australian reporting indicates that there has been a standoff between a group of police and military near Tasitolu.

IDP CAMPS

110. (U) NGO's working in the IDP camps report that numbers in the camps began to sharply increase again today. So far, new arrivals are reporting that they are there to escape the outbreak of communal violence in the Becora and Taibesse neighborhoods (see yesterday's East Timor Sitrep). Meanwhile, a second day of rain has begun to make life difficult in Dili's IDP camps. NGOs were working to address issues of flooding and sanitation.

SITUATION IN DILI

11. (U) The atmosphere around the city was tense, but there did not appear to be widespread panic. Government offices and many business closed early and workers were sent home. A yet unknown number of Dili residents have begun to flee the city, but there does not appear to be a mass exodus as there was earlier in the month. The heavy rains have flooded many parts of the capital city and are likely causing people to remain in their homes. International flights out of Timor were less than half full, but airline offices and travel agencies closed this afternoon after the fighting broke out. American citizens have been notified of the current security situation and been strongly advised to avoid the affected areas, see EAC cable for more information.
STEIN